

FALL PREVENTION TIPS

Below is a list of numerous strategies for preventing falls in our daily lives. Though these strategies apply to all ages, it is critically important for our aging population. Please incorporate these ideas into your educational activities in your local communities.

- Avoid walking in slippery shoes, socks, slippers, high-heeled shoes, or shoes with little support.
- Avoid scatter rugs and slippery or cluttered floors. Keep in mind the differences in floor levels and thresholds. Be sure all carpeting, especially on stairs, is securely tacked down.
- Use extra caution when walking while wearing bifocals. If possible, take off bifocals when going up or down stairs.
- Light all stairwells and put handrails on both sides.
- When climbing stairs, keep one arm free to hold the railing.
- Make multiple trips when carrying items like groceries.
- Use grab bars in the tub, shower, and next to the toilet.
- Use a rubber mat in the tub or shower.
- Place a plastic chair with a back and nonskid leg tips in the shower if unsteadiness is a problem.
- Keep flashlights with batteries next to the bed and in convenient locations throughout the house.
- Use nightlights. Pack nightlights for traveling.
- Replace floor lamps with ceiling fixtures or voice- or sound activated lamps. Use the brightest light bulbs that are allowed by the fixture's safety recommendations.
- Reorganize work areas to avoid reaching or bending. Step stools should have handrails or wide steps.
- Carry a portable phone from room to room to take incoming calls or call for help if necessary.
- Arrange to make contact with a relative or friend daily. Tell someone where you are at all times.

- Contract with a monitoring company if you are ill or older and live alone.
- Be aware of medication side effects.
- Have regular hearing and vision tests.
- If you feel you are about to fall, try to sit down since the soft tissues of the buttocks help protect against hip fractures.
- Many falls occur at home because people trip while walking or while getting up too quickly from sitting.
- Keep the temperature in the house at a comfortable temperature. Extremely hot or cold temperatures often make people dizzy.
- Get up slowly after eating, resting or sleeping. Straighten posture and stand still for several moments before beginning to move.
- Those with illnesses that affect circulation, sensation or mobility are more susceptible to dizzy spells.
- Medications such as blood pressure pills, heart medications, sedatives, antidepressants, tranquilizers and muscle relaxants can also cause dizziness.
- If you begin to fall, immediately try to sit on your buttocks. The soft tissue of the buttocks provides some cushion against hip fracture.
- Have vision and hearing tests regularly. As aging takes place, reflexes slow and a simple act such as bending may throw some people off balance.
- Regular exercise helps to maintain muscle tone, balance and enhance reflexes, providing further protection against falls.
- Wear shoes that provide firm traction and provide stable ankle support. Keep the feet in contact with the ground and keep the weight on the balls of the feet.
- For areas that get snow and ice, try carrying a little rock salt or kitty litter in your pocket or car to spread on the pavement before walking.
- For rainy areas, be careful on slippery wet floors, driveways, sidewalks and streets.
- Use a winter-tipped cane or walker for added stability.
- Beware of highly polished floors that are slippery when wet. Always walk on plastic or carpet runners.